United Nations A/C.1/51/PV.3

General Assembly
Fifty-first session

Official Records

First Committee

3rd Meeting
Monday, 14 October 1996, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Sychou ..... (Belarus)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Statement by the Secretary-General

The Chairman: On behalf of the Committee, it is my great pleasure and honour to warmly welcome His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Secretary-General, who has kindly agreed to address the Committee on the opening day of our substantive work.

The Secretary-General: I should like first to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to this important position. I know that you will bring to your new responsibilities the same keen sense of diplomacy and creative compromise that has distinguished your career. Under your able chairmanship, the First Committee is assured of making swift progress on the urgent issues on its agenda.

It is a great pleasure for me to address the First Committee so soon after the successful adoption and signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Speaker after speaker in the General Assembly over the last three weeks defined the Treaty as a landmark and as an important step towards complete nuclear disarmament. The Test-Ban Treaty adds to the stockpile of political and legal instruments that can help us ward off the threat of nuclear self-destruction that has been hanging over our heads for more than 50 years.

Here in this building, which symbolizes the collective will of the community of nations, I had the honour to open the Treaty for signature a little more than three weeks ago. The United Nations, which offers its Member States an institutionalized framework for dialogue, negotiation and collaboration on issues of global significance and universal impact, takes legitimate pride in having made that event possible.

On behalf of today's children and tomorrow's generations, I commend the work of the many men and women in public and private life who prepared the ground for this historic achievement. The political and technical work of the Conference on Disarmament, which led to the complex draft text of the Treaty and its detailed verification protocols, was a major accomplishment. The fact that the draft enjoyed the international community's overwhelming support is a tribute to the unique capacity of the Conference. How else could such a complex multilateral disarmament treaty attract 123 signatures and one ratification in such a short time? How else could such sophisticated arrangements for verifying compliance with the Treaty's provisions have been developed?

No mention of the Treaty should be made without paying a special tribute to Ambassador Jaap Ramaker's firm and skilled guidance of the Ad Hoc Committee. Without his exceptional energy, patience and ability to win compromises, I doubt that so much progress could have been made in so little time on such a complex issue. From the very start of the negotiations, the main objective of many non-nuclear-weapon States was to build into the architecture of the Treaty a renewed commitment by all States, and particularly the nuclear-weapon States, to a progressive and more systematic process leading to complete — I repeat, complete — nuclear disarmament. The conclusion of the Test-Ban Treaty has increased the momentum towards nuclear disarmament.

96-86488 (E)

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Great expectations have arisen that international security and stability can be assured at the same time that movement towards nuclear disarmament can be accelerated. The race to nuclear disengagement and disarmament should become as relentless as was the nuclear arms race during the cold war. Now, in the closing years of the twentieth century, the question should be: What are the next steps towards a secure and stable twenty-first century without nuclear weapons and without weapons of mass destruction?

Ideas from prestigious sources have added recently to a sense of urgency regarding nuclear disarmament. I refer in particular to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, issued in July, on whether the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons was permitted under any circumstances under international law. While some aspects of the Court's opinion may be controversial, it has raised the issue to a new legal level. The judges ruled that there existed

> "an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control". *(A/51/4, para. 182)*

This is a new and significant way of perceiving commitments to disarmament negotiations. The Court's opinion has captured, in my view, the understanding of the obligations assumed by States Parties under Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. This understanding also applies to the Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, adopted in 1995. The implication is that negotiations will lead to the conclusion of agreements. My hope is that all States will extract from this particular aspect of the Court's opinion the incentive to strive to take concrete steps towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

At the macro level, the international community cannot lower its guard. The destructive force of today's nuclear stockpiles equals 750,000 bombs of the size used at Hiroshima. Some still consider nuclear weapons to be a viable means of warfare. The possibility of nuclear accidents, terrorism and trafficking in nuclear materials persists. The threat of the use of chemical and biological weapons has not been eliminated.

But at the micro level, the challenges are no less demanding. Tens of thousands of people are still being killed each year by small arms. Anti-personnel landmines are still being planted faster than they are removed. By their very nature, small arms are more difficult to control than nuclear weapons. The legal and illegal trade in conventional weapons, large and small, jeopardizes the gains that resulted from the end of the cold war and consumes too much of the budgets of developing States.

What steps must be taken to meet these challenges? The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START II) should be ratified and implemented. I welcome the reports of progress in the talks between the two sides and urge them to keep up the momentum. Early ratification of the Treaty by the Russian Federation would allow reductions in the nuclear arsenals to proceed and a START III process to begin. Further joint or unilateral measures by both sides can reduce the risk that the dismantled weapons might be used again.

I have often underlined the importance I attach to preventing and combating illicit trafficking in nuclear materials. I therefore welcome the programme announced at the Summit on Nuclear Safety and Security of the major developed countries held in Moscow this past April. I also commend the work done by a wide range of intergovernmental agencies, under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency, to prevent illicit trafficking in nuclear materials.

The Conference on Disarmament, intensely busy as it was with the test-ban Treaty, was not able to proceed this year to negotiations on a cut-off of the production of fissile material for weapons purposes. The way forward is now open. A cut-off is a practicable, possible and logical next step in the process of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. I urge the First Committee to take up this item with a new spirit of flexibility and to help set the course of the Conference on Disarmament in 1997.

As depositary of the Chemical Weapons Convention, I would like to be able to announce the entry into force of the Convention. This would give it full effect as international law and would allow its sophisticated verification system to come into being. No matter how foolproof the chemical weapons prohibition regime may be, it will not be credible without the participation of the two major Powers. I am gratified that the President of the United States announced during the general debate that he would not abandon the Convention. The Convention is in the best interest of the entire international community, and I urge the Russian Federation and the United States to ratify it as soon as possible. At the same time, I call upon the States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention, at their upcoming Review Conference, to strengthen that

Convention by finalizing the arrangements for a verification protocol.

Following the adherence to the Treaty of Tlatelolco by all States of the Latin American and Caribbean region in 1994, I have welcomed the signature of the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty in December 1995, the signature of the Protocols to the Treaty of Rarotonga by three nuclear-weapon States in March 1996, and the signature the following month of the Treaty creating the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. These successes have led to a strong call, during this session of the General Assembly, for talks to begin on the establishment of other nuclear-weapon-free zones, including one in the Middle East. I welcome these initiatives and urge the States concerned to bring this noble idea to fruition.

For the men, women and children of war-ravaged countries, and for the safety and security of United Nations peace forces, I shall continue strongly to press for a total ban on anti-personnel landmines. I am encouraged by the steps being taken, unilaterally or jointly, by many States to adopt national measures to ban or restrict these weapons, and I support the efforts under way in this Committee to begin negotiations towards a total ban.

The Panel on small arms, established by the General Assembly last year, is using the innovative approach of holding workshops in areas where the proliferation of small arms is a source of increased tension. The first workshop took place in South Africa last month. I am encouraged by the process begun by the Panel, and I look forward to the results that will be reported next year.

As part of the System-wide Special Initiative for Africa, which I inaugurated in March 1996, an integrated approach to peace and development is being implemented in various regions of the continent. As one practical example, United Nations assistance to the demobilization of former fighters in Mali and their reintegration into civilian life contributes to the consolidation of peace in that country. I am consulting with other countries in West Africa in order to determine how best to respond to their specific concerns in this area.

I welcomed the signature in June 1995, by almost all the States of Central Africa, of the Non-Aggression Pact drafted under the auspices of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. Funding for further steps to reinforce confidence-building in volatile regions is needed, and I express my deep appreciation to those States that are currently funding such activities. I appeal for additional contributions to sustain this effort.

Developing a disarmament agenda for the twenty-first century must be a priority for the Governments of this century. There now seems to be overwhelming support for the proposal to convene another special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. That session could assess the security situation in the post-cold-war era and set the negotiating agenda for the years to come. Preparations for such a session could start as early as next year. The actual timing of the session could be left open, if necessary, until consensus emerges on its agenda and programme. The international community is calling for a clear signal that the cold-war era is over and that cold-war approaches to disarmament are being replaced by new and more effective approaches.

I wish the Committee a most successful session.

The Chairman: I thank His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali for his inspiring and forward-looking statement, which, I am sure, will help us in our deliberations. I understand that the Secretary-General has other pressing engagements and that he will have to leave us at this point. I wish him every success in his important work.

Statement by the Chairman

The Chairman: Today the Committee will begin its general debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items. Permit me first, however, to make a statement as presiding officer of the First Committee.

As we start the substantive part of our work, it gives me real pleasure to extend a warm welcome to all representatives participating in the work of the First Committee during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. I am fully aware that the office to which I have been elected represents a very demanding duty: to insure the successful and efficient functioning of this body entrusted with the issues of international peace and security.

The Republic of Belarus has always been an active participant and contributor in international forums dealing with disarmament. The contribution of Belarus in the field of nuclear disarmament has been particularly prominent in recent years. Allow me to express my sincere gratitude for the deep appreciation that many have expressed at the efforts Belarus has been undertaking along these lines. I assure the Committee, from this podium, that my country

intends to promote this process with growing perseverance and in every way possible. I pledge to foster the valuable traditions established by this Committee over the past years in order to further international cooperation and interaction in implementing its mandate.

The fifty-first session of the General Assembly has started its work in a propitious international climate. A long journey which started in 1954 has ended with a most welcome result: the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. This is a commendable outcome of the persistent efforts of the international community, and, I hope, an opening of a new chapter in the endeavours towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

As the Secretary-General just pointed out, 123 States signed the Treaty in less than three weeks. That fact speaks for itself. Indeed, the achievements of the international community in the field of disarmament during the last several years have been impressive. However, much more remains to be done.

The cold war is over. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons has been extended indefinitely. START I and START II have been concluded. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has been opened for signature. Yet nuclear weapons remain a formidable element of the military posture of the nuclear-weapon States. Serious debate is now open on the future role of nuclear weapons, including the admissibility of the threat or use of nuclear weapons.

Viewed from this angle, the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons will undoubtedly influence all future discussions on the problem of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, as well as on their elimination. The Court reached a unanimous conclusion that there exists an obligation not only to pursue in good faith negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control, but also to bring them to a conclusion.

Negotiations on such a complex issue will of course not be achieved overnight. Decades of long disarmament-related negotiations have made it clear that arms control and disarmament cannot work without a minimum level of trust and political cooperation. The precondition for successful negotiations is building confidence, openness and transparency. These play a crucial role in maintaining international peace and stability.

The Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok have established nuclear-weapon-free zones in Latin America and the Caribbean, the South Pacific, Africa and South-East Asia. Along with the Antarctic Treaty, they have helped to turn the entire southern hemisphere into a consolidated nuclear-weapon-free zone. These developments have been universally recognized as a major contribution to the process of nuclear disarmament, to the promotion of peace and security in their respective regions — as well as globally — and as an important boost to the adoption of nuclear-weapon-free zones by States in other regions of the world.

The majority of the States Members of the United Nations support a worldwide network of nuclear-weapon-free zones, which would make the production, acquisition and stockpiling of nuclear weapons redundant.

It gives me great pleasure, in my national capacity, to state that the last nuclear missile remaining in the territory of Belarus will be removed very shortly. The entire territory of Central Europe from the Baltic to the Black Seas will be a nuclear-weapon-free space. The inspired initiative for a nuclear-weapon-free Central Europe put forward by Alyaksandr Lukashenko, President of the Republic of Belarus, and Leonid Kuchma, President of Ukraine, has far-reaching global consequences. I believe it has the solid potential to enhance regional stability and to further the post-cold-war security interests of all States.

There is a wide variety of issues ahead of us. One of the most important among them is the urgent necessity to start negotiations in the enlarged Conference on Disarmament on the prohibition of the production of fissile materials for weapons purposes. I hope that the difference in views among the members of the Conference on Disarmament which prevented them from establishing an ad hoc committee on this subject last year will be overcome.

A cut-off of the production of fissile material would strengthen nuclear non-proliferation. The safe-keeping, storage, and disposal of enriched uranium and plutonium could become major threats because of the risk of illegal sale and acquisition, and even outright theft, of these highly sensitive materials. Discontinuing production of fissile materials could be a welcome and long-overdue first step in the right direction.

With regard to other weapons of mass destruction, it is a recognized fact that the successful conclusion of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and

on Their Destruction gave a powerful impulse to the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. These agreements, together with the efforts to strengthen the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, have demonstrated the collective political will and ability of the world community to tackle successfully the complex issue of weapons of mass destruction, which has been at the forefront of all disarmament-related efforts since the Second World War.

The opening for signature of the chemical weapons Convention in January 1993 was a source of pride to the disarmament community. It is imperative, however, to persist in efforts aimed at the earliest possible entry into force of that Convention. Sixty-four countries have already ratified the Convention, leaving it just one country short of entry into force. I hope that the sixty-fifth ratification will soon be forthcoming. However, if the chemical weapons ban is to become a significant reality, the ratification of the Convention by the two major chemical-weapons Powers is of paramount importance and would be a clear-cut demonstration of the moral leadership that the rest of the world expects from them.

The last two years have witnessed an increase in the attention of the disarmament community to the biological weapons Convention. This agreement was the first multilaterally negotiated disarmament convention. Over the years it has effectively prevented the development and production of biological and toxin weapons and has proved its value. However, the Convention does not provide for verification of any sort. Determined to remedy this deficiency, the States parties have embarked on an ambitious project to formulate a verification protocol for the Convention. The issue has been considered by a group of scientific and technical experts, and the findings of that group are now being evaluated by the Ad Hoc Group of States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention. It is encouraging that the results of the last session of the Ad Hoc Group reported considerable success in their undertakings. I look forward to a successful outcome of the upcoming review conference.

Measures pertaining to the elimination of other weapons of mass destruction are no less important to our Committee's work. One of the standing priorities in international relations is the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the need to establish a consensus on an international procedure that would allow for the monitoring of emerging new weapons of mass destruction and provide for international negotiations in order to discern, in a timely manner, the appearance of new types of weapons.

The ecologically safe elimination of weapons, the conversion of military production, the legal transfer of sensitive high technologies and their impact on progress in science and technology, are also of particular importance.

A brief analysis of the statements made at this session of the General Assembly shows that an overwhelming majority of Member States are concerned with the problem of landmines and are determined to pursue it vigorously. This comes as no surprise, since the devastation these weapons cause throughout the world and the untold human suffering they continue to inflict on innocent people have attained dreadful proportions.

I can express my personal satisfaction over the fact that additional protocols to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects have been elaborated. I refer here to the conclusion of amendments to its Protocol II on landmines, and the adoption of an additional protocol on blinding laser weapons.

We are, however, only at the beginning of the road. While there is a multitude of avenues to be explored, I think that the international community could be most successful if it adopted a three-track approach. The first track concerns moratoriums on the transfer of landmines to non-State entities and to States which are not bound by the Protocol to the Convention on certain conventional weapons. The second track concerns strengthening international cooperation in mine clearance and significantly broadening the scope of such cooperation. The third track concerns tackling the landmine issue through international law, that is, through strengthening the Convention itself. The ultimate goal of these undertakings should be a total ban on and the elimination of anti-personnel landmines.

Although weapons of mass destruction remain the focus of disarmament-related activities, the problem of conventional weapons continues to gain ground due to a combination of factors. Among these one should mention ethnic conflicts, the increased volume of arms transfers and alarming trends in the illicit trade in arms. The establishment of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms was a first significant step. Although the Register is not a disarmament measure, it has proven to be a highly successful confidence-building instrument for

the international community. I look forward with great expectations to the upcoming meeting of the group of governmental experts which is charged with the task of the further improvement and development of this international reporting mechanism.

I also welcome the positive outcome of this year's session of the Disarmament Commission, which for the first time has adopted a set of guidelines for international arms transfers, dealing especially with illicit trafficking in arms. In a way, these guidelines can be compared to a programme of action to reduce arms transfers and eradicate the illicit trade in arms through a combination of national legislative and administrative measures and United Nations efforts. The ultimate goal is to ensure that transfers of arms do not contribute to instability and insecurity in nations.

Regional and local conflicts persist in different parts of the world. They have brought to light the issue of the proliferation and excessive accumulation of small arms in many countries. A panel of governmental experts began its examination of the problem this year, and I look forward to its report to the General Assembly next year.

The decision in principle to hold a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament is a demonstration of the desire on the part of an overwhelming majority of Member States to analyze in depth the changes that have occurred in the post-cold-war era and to assess the future place and role that disarmament can and should play in the next decade: the first decade of the new millennium. This could be an important opportunity to solicit new concepts and visions prompted by the unprecedented systemic changes in international relations.

Allow me to take a moment to commend the work of international non-governmental organizations and their increased contribution to the work of the United Nations in recent years. The role that civil organizations have played in bringing about consensus on important disarmament agreements cannot be overestimated.

We have important issues ahead of us, and I believe that the deliberations in the First Committee can help to create new, fertile ground for innovative approaches. I am certain that the First Committee can make a significant contribution towards the attainment of our common objective: a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and a greatly reduced level of conventional weapons. I count on the cooperation and good will of all delegations.

Agenda items 60 to 81

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

Mr. De Icaza (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Sir, please accept the congratulations of the Mexican delegation on your election to preside over the work of the First Committee. Your experience and your personal qualities augur well for success. Please be assured of the cooperation and support of my delegation in this important task.

The year that has passed since the First Committee met during the last session of the General Assembly has been a particularly productive year for nuclear disarmament. The Treaties of Bangkok and Pelindaba have joined those of the Antarctic, Tlatelolco and Rarotonga, gradually freeing the South of nuclear weapons. The International Court of Justice has declared in a historic advisory opinion that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be contrary to the rules of international law applicable to armed conflicts. We regret, however, that the Court did not develop its own arguments to their logical and inevitable conclusion.

Finally, a Treaty banning nuclear-test explosions and any other nuclear explosion has been opened for signature.

International peace and security were strengthened on 15 December 1995 with the signing at Bangkok of the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, and with the opening for signature at Cairo on 11 April 1996 of the Treaty of Pelindaba, which establishes a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa.

The initiative to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central and Eastern Europe and including the Baltic States, advanced recently by the President of Belarus, in itself has a positive impact in a region once deeply entrenched in the East-West conflict.

The regime for the denuclearization of Latin America and the Caribbean is almost completed. The full adherence of Guyana to the Treaty of Tlatelolco on 6 May 1996, increases to 31 the number of States of the region for which this instrument is in force.

These nuclear-weapon-free zones are proof that there is a need to free the international community of the dangers that result from the very existence of nuclear weapons. These zones are not an end in themselves, but, rather, a

step towards the fulfilment of the obligation of eliminating all nuclear weapons.

Mexico therefore expresses its full support for the initiative taken by Brazil concerning the recognition that the various Treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones are gradually freeing the southern hemisphere and adjacent areas of nuclear weapons.

We need to develop mechanisms of cooperation among the various zones as part of the efforts to consolidate the respective regimes. While negotiations on these Treaties have responded to the characteristics of each region, they have also largely taken into account the experience of those areas where similar regimes already existed.

Consequently, the cooperation between nuclear-weapon-free zones should stimulate the establishment of new ones, particularly in militarily and politically sensitive regions. The meeting in 1995 of the treaty bodies created under the Tlatelolco and Rarotonga regimes, which resulted in the General Assembly resolution on nuclear tests adopted at its previous session, marked the beginning of the kind of fruitful cooperation that the Government of Mexico is committed to promoting.

In this connection, the Council of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) adopted a resolution on 3 April 1996 by which it requested its Secretary-General to prepare a report on the possibility of concluding cooperation agreements with the nuclear-weapon-free zones of the South Pacific, South-East Asia and Africa, with a view to coordinating positions when dealing with disarmament issues in United Nations forums.

My delegation will submit a draft resolution on the consolidation of the regime established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco that will take up the idea of promoting cooperation between those zones, in accordance with OPANAL's resolution.

On 8 July of this year, a date that merits remembering, the International Court of Justice rendered a historic advisory opinion that categorically de-legitimized nuclear weapons. Mexico had argued before the Court the existence of rules of international law that leave no doubt about the illegality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons in any circumstance. We are therefore satisfied with the advisory opinion, and especially with three of its particularly important conclusions.

First, the Court strengthened basic rules of international humanitarian law when it affirmed that the prohibition of the use of weapons, projectiles or materials that may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects among combatants and civilians is to be observed by all States, whether or not they have ratified the conventions to that effect, because it constitutes an inviolable principle of customary international law. The Court added that all States are bound by rules of Additional Protocol I to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which, when adopted, were merely the expression of the pre-existing customary law, such as the Martens clause.

We welcome the fact that the Court has highlighted the universal applicability of the basic rules of the law of armed conflicts. In this connection we wish to underline that of those basic rules, none is more important than the principle that the norms of international humanitarian law must be fully applied in all circumstances.

This principle is enshrined in common article 1 to the four 1949 Geneva Conventions and is reaffirmed in the last preambular paragraph of Additional Protocol I to the Conventions. It constitutes the cornerstone of the whole edifice of humanitarian law, the rules of which must be applied without distinction, regardless of the character or origin of the conflict or of the causes invoked by the parties or attributed to them. In all circumstances, whether extreme or not, humanitarian norms must be respected, and all States are under the obligation to ensure that respect.

Secondly, the Court determined that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflicts, and in particular to the principles and rules of international humanitarian law.

Notwithstanding the arguments in favour of the doctrine of deterrence, the Court refused to say that even in an extreme circumstance in which the very survival of a State would be at stake, it would be lawful to use, or to threaten to use, nuclear weapons.

Lastly, the Court affirmed unanimously that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. We underline two elements of this important consideration. The first is the affirmation that the obligation concerns all States, and not merely those that possess nuclear weapons. The second is that such an obligation goes beyond merely conducting negotiations; it is an

obligation to conclude such negotiations. Not only did the Court declare that nuclear weapons are illegitimate, it also indicated to us the issue's priority on the disarmament agenda, until we reach a world free of those weapons that the Court affirmed to be of a catastrophic nature.

The Conference on Disarmament devoted three annual sessions to the negotiation of a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty that, in accordance with the mandate of the General Assembly, was to be universal, verifiable and multilateral, and that would contribute effectively to the process of nuclear disarmament and prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects.

Mexico participated actively in those negotiations, and its representative to the Conference on Disarmament chaired the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban during the first of the three years of negotiations. Nevertheless, and like the majority of delegations, we felt that the final result was not to our entire satisfaction. The Treaty that opened for signature on 24 September prohibits test explosions and any other nuclear explosion. This will constrain the qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and will impede the development of advanced new types of such weapons.

It is indeed an important event. The international community had been demanding for more than four decades the definitive cessation of those explosions, which periodically reminded us that the fate of humankind depended on whether a button was pressed or not. However, banning nuclear explosions was never an end in itself. We aspired, and still aspire, to the definite end of the nuclear arms race through the total ban of all tests that make possible the qualitative improvement of such weapons.

The nuclear-weapon States opposed the inclusion in the Treaty of any explicit commitment in this respect. We nevertheless trust in their good faith, and we hope that they will abide fully by the spirit and purpose of the Treaty and that they will not pursue in laboratories — through sub-critical explosions, hydrodynamic tests or laser physics — the qualitative arms race they carried out underground.

The entry into force of the Treaty is in jeopardy and depends on the ratification of one and all of the 44 listed States. Nevertheless, its signature alone obliges signatory States to refrain from acts that would defeat its object and purpose. It is to be underlined that the five nuclear-weapon States have already signed the Treaty and therefore may not unilaterally suspend the moratoriums on nuclear explosions that they have declared.

In spite of its shortcomings and imperfections, the Treaty was approved by the General Assembly by an impressive majority of 158 votes, and already more than 100 States have signed it, Mexico among them. The popularity of this Treaty — which a majority of States have criticized for its limited scope and because it does not entirely fulfil the negotiating mandate — is not surprising. The international community, anxious for progress in nuclear disarmament, is aware that the Treaty may constitute an important step towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons, on the condition of its being followed by negotiations, on a high-priority basis, among all States on a phased programme with agreed time-frames for the consolidation of a world freed of those weapons that threaten the very existence of humankind.

It can be said, in all fairness, that where nuclear weapons are concerned the past year is indeed worth remembering. The same, however, cannot be said with regard to other weapons of mass destruction. For the third consecutive year since its opening for signature, the Convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons has not entered into force. When it was opened for signature 1993, the Treaty was welcomed as the instrument that was to abolish an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. On that occasion, we declared that the effective implementation of that unprecedented, comprehensive and verifiable agreement would strengthen multilateralism as a basis for peace and international security.

The Convention has been ratified by 64 States, but not by the only two that have declared that they possess huge arsenals of chemical weapons. One more ratification is needed for the Convention's entry into force, but if that occurs without the participation of the United States and Russia, the Convention would automatically become just another exercise in horizontal non-proliferation, thereby losing its object and purpose.

In the first and only resolution of the General Assembly adopted on that Convention after it was concluded, all the signatories underlined the absolute need for it to enjoy universal adherence. Unfortunately, at neither the forty-ninth nor the fiftieth sessions of the General Assembly could we adopt resolutions on the need for this important Convention to enter into force with its objectives intact.

This year, given the circumstances, we must make every effort to ensure that the General Assembly calls upon all States to ratify the Convention and that it requests the Secretary-General to report in 1997 on the status of signatures and ratifications, so as to enable us to examine the Convention's future and thereby to determine whether its declared objectives and its very nature have been vitiated by the lack of specific ratifications and, if that is the case, to take the necessary measures.

At the present time the Convention on the prohibition of biological weapons is being reviewed in order to incorporate a verification mechanism into it. Mexico supports the idea of preparing a protocol on verification and regrets the slowness of the preparatory work that would allow us to initiate negotiations.

The various treaties on non-proliferation presuppose a balance of obligations and the commitment not to acquire a particular type of weapon. These include free access to technology, information and equipment for peaceful purposes. That should lead us to multilaterally negotiated, universal and non-discriminatory verification mechanisms, aimed at building confidence and at stimulating cooperation.

The non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction requires of the international community a comprehensive approach that will take into account the horizontal, vertical and qualitative aspects of non-proliferation as well as the exchange, for peaceful purposes, of technology, information, equipment and materials related to those weapons, including the establishment of control mechanisms for possible dual usage. At the forty-eighth session, Mexico submitted a draft resolution on this item in which it requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report to be submitted to an expert group. The report was submitted, but no expert group has ever studied it. This issue deserves to remain on the General Assembly's agenda and merits a thorough examination with a view to exploring different courses of action. We will submit a draft decision on this question to the Committee.

It has generally been recognized that conventional disarmament and conventional-arms control have better chances of success at the regional level. We know that in the post-cold-war world tension and threats to peace have arisen mainly in the regional and subregional context and that each region has its own characteristics and security needs. It is also obvious that conflicts and local tensions, terrorism and organized crime benefit from the lack of effective conventional-arms control.

During the recent summit meeting of the Rio Group, which was held at Cochabamba, Bolivia, the President of Mexico submitted two proposals. The first was on the adoption of measures to prevent an arms race in Latin America and the Caribbean, which, owing to the diversion of financial resources that would be involved, would have a negative effect on our economic development. The second dealt with the idea of concluding a convention to impede the illicit transfer of weapons, which in that region of the world is linked to drug trafficking and organized crime. The Heads of State and Government of the Rio Group approved in principle both proposals, which will soon be examined in detail.

At a global level, we are aware that certain conventional weapons, owing to their indiscriminate effects and their widespread use, have effects similar to those of weapons of mass destruction. This is particularly true in the case of anti-personnel landmines, which have no military usefulness and are effective only with respect to the civilian population that they decimate.

It was precisely the fate of the civilian population that resulted in the public uproar that led France to request the convening of the Review Conference of the 1980 Convention on prohibitions or restrictions on the use of certain conventional weapons, which this year concluded positively as far as a new protocol on blinding laser weapons is concerned, and disappointingly with respect to landmines, since it was possible to prohibit only those that are non-detectable. The use of detectable landmines is subject in some cases to the requirement of their being self-destructible or self-neutralizing, but not until a decade after the entry into force of the Amended Protocol, which amounts to allowing the use of present stocks. Not only have landmines not been banned, but the use of sophisticated and expensive devices has also been promoted. If that use is to be massive, as has been the use of mines, we would have absurdly stimulated the production and use of a new weapon of mass, albeit slow-motion, destruction, a result unprecedented in the annals of humanitarian law.

Mexico views as necessary a total prohibition of the deployment, transfer, production and stockpiling of anti-personnel landmines. We will not support in the Assembly any resolution incompatible with that view. Furthermore, in the context of the international Conference recently held at Ottawa, Mexico and Canada presented a project of cooperation for the rehabilitation of the victims of anti-personnel landmines victims in Central America.

The Review Conference on the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons was an opportunity for the international community to recall its existence and to promote ratifications to the Treaty. We should start preparing the next Review Conference, and this now being done. In August of this year, the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities called upon all States to focus on certain weapons with indiscriminate effects, such as air-fuel explosives, cluster bombs and munitions that contain spent uranium.

We hope that the group of countries that participated in the Ottawa meeting will not conclude its endeavours once it achieves a total anti-personnel landmines ban and that it will remain intact as a group to promote negotiations for the further prohibition of other weapons, such as incendiary weapons, or for the conclusion of new protocols on weapons such as the ones indicated by the Subcommission on minorities.

Prohibitions or limitations of the use of conventional weapons should continue to be negotiated in their natural forum, which is the 1980 Convention, whose review Conferences can and should be prepared for in ad hoc meetings including the participation of the International Committee of the Red Cross. At the Conference on Disarmament, the priority issue can be none other than nuclear disarmament, at least until the nuclear-weapon States adopt a positive and constructive attitude towards it.

Compared to the past history of the second half of the present century, which is about to end, it can be said today that we are living in privileged times. Rivalry between blocs has disappeared; global tensions have been reduced, if not totally eliminated, and it seems that the imminent danger of a nuclear holocaust has receded. The easing of tensions has led to the limitation and reduction of strategic offensive weapons through the START I and START II processes; the international regime of nuclear non-proliferation has been strengthened with the indefinite extension of that Treaty, and nuclear-test explosions have ceased once and for all.

However, nuclear arsenals with a capacity to destroy humankind several times over remain, and as long as those arsenals exist there will be the risk that nuclear weapons may be used, whether on purpose, by accident or by miscalculation. Moreover, the possibility of a terrorist use of nuclear weapons will increase. Nuclear weapons continue to jeopardize the very future of humankind.

That is why the international community represented in this forum and civil society the world over have mobilized in an effort to de-legitimize nuclear weapons and to demonstrate the anachronistic nature of military doctrines that attempt to justify the existence, stockpiling and improvement — and even the use — of such weapons. The total and definitive elimination of nuclear weapons continues to be the highest priority of the international community. There is an obligation incumbent on all States, as was recently underlined by the International Court of Justice, to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

In order to comply with this imperative obligation, Mexico last year sponsored resolution 50/70 P, in which the General Assembly, for the first time, called for the negotiation of a phased programme of nuclear disarmament leading to the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework. In the Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral negotiating body in this matter, the Group of Non-Aligned and neutral States, to which Mexico belongs, insisted on several occasions on the need to establish immediately an ad hoc committee to begin negotiations on a step-by-step programme of nuclear disarmament. My delegation had the honour of coordinating the work of the Group of 21 for the purpose of submitting a draft programme of action to the Conference on Disarmament.

As a result of that exercise, on 7 August of this year the Coordinator of the Group of the 21 presented to the Conference on Disarmament, on behalf of the 28 delegations belonging to that Group, a programme enumerating measures to be adopted in three phases to achieve the consolidation of a nuclear-weapon-free world by the year 2020. We will request that this programme of action be circulated as a document for the information of the First Committee. We are convinced that this proposal can enrich and improve existing options for reaching the goal of eliminating the nuclear nightmare without affecting the security of any State, and can stimulate negotiations on nuclear disarmament, which, I stress, my delegation views as the highest priority.

Mr. O'Rourke (Ireland): Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the European Union, let me congratulate you most sincerely on your election to preside over the First Committee. We are confident that your wise direction and the assistance of the other Officers of the Committee will facilitate the work of the Committee this year. The European Union wishes to assure you of its whole hearted support in the discharge of

your important responsibilities. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and the Slovak Republic — and the associated countries Cyprus and Malta, as well as Iceland and Norway, European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

As we move closer to the twenty-first century, the international security environment presents a mix of tremendous opportunities and continuing and new challenges. Recent weeks have seen the adoption and opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. In view of the fact that 64 ratifications have been deposited to date, the Chemical Weapons Convention is expected to enter into force in 1997. We hope for agreement by mid-1998 on a verification protocol to the Convention on biological and toxic weapons. Thus, the commitment of the international community to develop the network of international disarmament and non-proliferation agreements in the field of weapons of mass destruction is steadily showing results.

The past year has also seen a number of concrete achievements in the area of conventional disarmament. In May, the Review Conference of the Convention on conventional weapons concluded its work successfully with the adoption of stricter rules on the use of landmines and a total ban on blinding laser weapons. We welcome the conclusion of the Review Conference of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe in May and, in particular, the reaffirmation by the States parties to the Treaty of the continuing and fundamental value they attach to the Treaty as a cornerstone of European security and their full commitment to adherence to its goals and objectives. We urge all States parties to the Treaty to confirm their approval of the final document of the Review Conference by 15 December 1996.

The European Union attaches importance to the timely implementation by the parties of their obligations under the arms-control and regional-stabilization aspects of the Paris Agreement. The signature in January of an agreement on confidence-building measures within Bosnia and Herzegovina, and at the peace conference held at Florence in June of an agreement on subregional arms control, were important first steps towards stabilization in that troubled region. But the risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the dangers to peace inherent in the excessive accumulation of conventional weapons remain. In the coming weeks the European Union will address those issues in an open and constructive manner. It is our strong wish to cooperate with all other delegations in the interests of a fruitful First Committee session.

The Security Council, meeting at the level of Heads of State or Government, has recognized that the proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction constitutes a threat to international peace and security. The global non-proliferation system received the strongest reinforcement last year with the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). That decision, in conjunction with the decision to strengthen the review process of the Treaty and the decision on the Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, improved the prospects for a better international security environment for all countries for the years ahead. Taken together, these decisions provide an essential frame of reference for the work of this Committee and other disarmament forums.

The year 1995 saw the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons made permanent, and 1996 is the year of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. For the European Union, this Treaty, which already has 123 signatory States, represents a concrete measure in the spirit of article VI of the NPT and as envisaged in the decision on Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. It is one of the most important multilateral nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament measures concluded by the international community to date. Member States of the European Union had been among the most active participants in the negotiations for the Treaty. The Union strongly supported the initiative taken by Australia to ensure that the international community seized the moment. By contributing to the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and to the process of nuclear disarmament, the new Treaty will undoubtedly enhance international peace and security. It has already restored confidence that the international community will not let opportunities for progress slip by. The European Union calls on all States to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible in order to permit its entry into force without delay.

The new Treaty is not the end of the process. There is a need for further systematic and progressive efforts towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. With the conclusion of the CTBT negotiations, the European Union expects the Conference on Disarmament to activate without delay the Ad Hoc Committee that was mandated early last year to negotiate a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable

treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. The moratoriums on production currently observed by some nuclear-weapon States, including the United Kingdom and France, have created conditions for progress but cannot in themselves provide sufficient assurance against proliferation. The early conclusion of a cut-off treaty is, moreover, another important goal agreed at the NPT Review and Extension Conference. Those delegations that have long sought to have this item inscribed on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament should now show good faith in proceeding with consideration of the item.

The European Union underlines the importance, as acknowledged in the Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament agreed at last year's NPT Review Conference, of the determined pursuit by the nuclear-weapon States of systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally, with the ultimate goal of eliminating those weapons, and by all States of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. The European Union attaches priority to global nuclear-arms reductions, as it does to the CTBT and to cut-off. In this context, the Union welcomes the progress that continues to be made, including the important steps taken or announced by the United Kingdom and France, and calls for further reductions.

Since we last met, the United States has ratified the START II treaty. The European Union looks forward to early Russian ratification of that treaty, whose full implementation will bring Russian and United States strategic nuclear-weapons arsenals down to 3,000 and 3,500 respectively.

We applaud the completion by Ukraine, announced on 1 June 1996, of the withdrawal of all nuclear warheads from its territory for destruction in the Russian Federation. This remarkable success for nuclear non-proliferation would not have been possible without outside assistance. We also warmly welcome advances made in the past year that greatly extend the areas of the world covered by nuclear-weapon-free zones.

At the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the intensive efforts undertaken in the framework of Programme "93+2" over the past three years to reinforce further the international nuclear non-proliferation regime by strengthening the effectiveness and improving the efficiency of the Agency's safeguards system have reached a decisive phase. The European Union confirms its strong support for those objectives and its commitment to Programme "93+2". The Union supported the establishment of the Committee that has been charged by the Board of Governors with drafting a model protocol. We will continue to make every effort to bring the work of the Committee to a successful conclusion at the earliest possible date. We look forward to the adoption by the Board of Governors of a set of new measures that will significantly increase IAEA's capacity to detect undeclared nuclear activities. This would fully accord with the Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament adopted at the NPT Review Conference.

The European Union is determined that the enhanced NPT review process agreed last year, which attempts to ensure that the purposes of the preamble and the provisions of the Treaty are being realized, will develop into a valuable new element in the fight against nuclear proliferation. Under the new arrangement, the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the year 2000 Review Conference will take place next year, three years in advance of the Conference. The Union is pleased that the NPT depositories have initiated plans for consultation and caucusing during the period of the First Committee's session with a view to achieving agreement on the location and timing of the 1997 meeting.

The next Review Conference is charged with looking forward as well as back. In addition to making procedural preparations for the next Review Conference, the Preparatory Committee meetings have the substantive task of considering principles, objectives and ways to promote the full implementation of the Treaty, as well as its universality, and making recommendations thereon to the Review Conference. The European Union considers it important that, as agreed last year, future Review Conferences should evaluate the results of the period they are reviewing and identify the areas in which and the means through which further progress should be sought in the future. The review process should consider compliance with the NPT, taking into account the Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. The European Union intends to prepare actively for an invigorating and productive review of how this Treaty, which remains the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation regime, is working on the threshold of the new millennium.

All States members of the European Union are firmly committed to being parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction upon its entry into force. The Union calls on all States

signatories to the Convention to complete their respective ratification procedures as soon as possible. In particular, the Union urges those States that have declared possession of chemical weapons to ratify the Convention before it enters into force.

In accordance with its provisions, the Chemical Weapons Convention will enter into force 180 days after the deposit of the sixty-fifth instrument of ratification. In view of the fact that 64 ratifications have been deposited to date, the Convention is expected to enter into force in 1997. This will be a landmark event in the disarmament process. It will give major impetus to the elimination of an entire class of weapons of mass destruction and the removal of a most destabilizing threat to both global and regional peace and security. We are concerned that a number of States have not yet signed the Convention, particularly States located in regions of tension, and we call on those States to join the 160 Member States of the United Nations that through their signature have demonstrated their commitment to the purposes of the Convention. The European Union will do its utmost to promote the achievement of universal adherence to the Convention.

The satisfactory implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention will unquestionably result in the growth of confidence between States Parties. The European Union is committed to the implementation of the Convention in a manner that avoids hampering international cooperation in the chemical field for purposes not prohibited under the Convention. It is important that delegations to the Preparatory Commission for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons demonstrate the political will to bring about a successful outcome on outstanding issues in advance of the first States Parties Conference at The Hague next year.

Given the ease with which biological weapons may be produced and indications that not all biological-weapons programmes have been abandoned, the reinforcement of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction with a legally binding and effective verification regime will be in the security interests of all countries. The European Union has adopted a common position designed to serve this end and is actively engaged in the work under way in the Ad Hoc Group, which is mandated to consider appropriate measures, including verification measures, and to draft proposals to strengthen the Convention. Our objective is the adoption of a protocol to the Convention no later than mid-1998. In the run-up to the Convention's Fourth Review Conference later this year, the European Union has redoubled its efforts to ensure that the States Parties take the decisions necessary to give a strong political impetus to the negotiations in the Ad Hoc Group. The European Union recognizes that the Ad Hoc Group has made significant progress, including the identification of a preliminary framework for and elaborating basic elements of a legally binding instrument.

We welcome the decision by the Ad Hoc Group at its last session to intensify its work. In this context, we believe that the time allocated work relating to the Biological Weapons Convention in 1997 and 1998 should be substantially increased, irrespective of other priorities in the international disarmament agenda. The European Union also appeals to all States Parties that have not yet done so to submit the annual data required under the confidence-building measures agreed at the Third Review Conference of the Convention.

In addition to the relevant international treaties, export control measures are equally valid instruments for preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It must be clearly understood that the right enshrined in Article IV of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is to be exercised in conformity with the non-proliferation obligations set out in Articles I and II. Thus, far from being an obstacle to the promotion of peaceful uses of nuclear energy, nuclear-related export controls are the necessary corollary of peaceful nuclear cooperation. The Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament adopted at the 1995 NPT Review Conference state that transparency in nuclear-related export controls should be promoted within the framework of dialogue and cooperation among all interested States Parties to the Treaty. The European Union has taken the initiative in developing, with others, a follow-up on this important issue. We look forward to engaging a wide range of countries in dialogue on the subject.

Similarly, the export control arrangements pursued in the framework of the Australia Group and the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and the complementary measures of the Wassenaar Arrangement help to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery without hampering the transfer of or access to material, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes in the chemical, biological and space research fields. The Australia Group controls accord with both the letter and spirit of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

The Australia Group has undertaken to review, in the light of experience in implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention and for the benefit of States Parties demonstrably acting in full compliance with their obligations under the Convention, the measures it takes to prevent the proliferation of chemical weapons. Similarly, the Wassenaar Arrangement is designed to promote transparency and greater responsibility in the transfer of conventional arms and related technologies, where the risks are judged greatest.

The European Union invites all States to adopt responsible policies for transfers of sensitive materials and to establish effective systems of export controls as a means to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We call on other suppliers of nuclear technology to join the members of the Nuclear Suppliers' Group in applying the International Atomic Energy Agency full-scope safeguards requirements as a condition of nuclear supply.

We consider the Missile Technology Control Regime an effective and useful instrument for preventing the proliferation of delivery systems for weapons of mass destruction. We support the strengthening of the MTCR and appeal to all States that have not yet done so to adhere to its guidelines on a voluntary basis. The European Union believes that MTCR has a role to play in dealing with the threat of regional missile proliferation.

The European Union fully supports the United Nations Special Commission and IAEA in their continuing task of identifying and eliminating Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and ensuring that Iraq does not develop such weapons again. The European Union congratulates the Special Commission and IAEA on the substantial progress already made, and calls on Iraq to cooperate and to comply strictly with its obligations under United Nations Security Council resolutions so that the work can be completed.

The Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects was a major focus of international attention to certain conventional arms issues. In May 1996, the Review Conference successfully concluded its work with the adoption of an amended Protocol II on landmines in addition to the new Protocol IV on blinding laser weapons which it had adopted on 12 October 1995. The European Union considers that the achievements of the Review Conference, taken together, are significant steps forward, both in terms of the landmines Protocol itself and of the development of international humanitarian law. We have in mind the extension of the scope of the Protocol; the strengthening of restrictions on the use of mines; the new prohibitions regarding transfers, which are already being observed on the basis of a political commitment; the provisions on technological cooperation and assistance; and the regular review mechanism.

However, the results fell short of our expectations and of specific goals of the Union, such as an effective and binding verification mechanism and minimal, if any, periods of deferral of compliance. At the close of the Review Conference, the European Union pledged to continue to seek solutions to the problems caused by anti-personnel landmines and to strive towards the goal of their eventual elimination as stated in resolution 50/70 O. The Union firmly believes that the international community at every level must intensify its efforts towards eliminating the causes of this international humanitarian disaster as well as getting to grips with its horrific effects. We warmly commend the timely initiative taken by Canada in convening earlier this month an international meeting of countries that have committed themselves and taken national action to advance a global ban on anti-personnel landmines. We have associated ourselves with the Ottawa Declaration: Towards a Global Ban on Anti-Personnel Landmines. A follow-on conference will be hosted by Belgium in June 1997 to review the progress of the international community in achieving a global ban on anti-personnel mines.

The European Union has reviewed its position in the light of developments and has adopted a new Joint Action on anti-personnel landmines. The Joint Action expresses the Union's resolve to combat and end the indiscriminate use and spread throughout the world of anti-personnel landmines and to contribute to solving the problems already caused by these weapons. Furthermore, it sets out the steps which the Union and its member States are to take forthwith towards the full implementation of the results of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons Review Conference. As an immediate step, all member States of the European Union are to take all possible action to ratify at an early date, without invoking the provisions concerning deferral of compliance, the amended Protocol II on landmines as well as the new Protocol IV on blinding laser weapons. They will also take concerted action to promote universal adherence to the 1980 Convention and the Protocols annexed to it. The Joint Action also enshrines the Union's commitment to support international efforts to ban anti-personnel landmines. The European Union will work actively towards the achievement at the earliest possible

date of an effective international agreement to ban these weapons worldwide. It will seek to raise without delay the issue of a total ban, to which it is committed, in the most appropriate international forum. The new Joint Action commits the Member States to implement a common moratorium on the export of all anti-personnel landmines to all destinations and to endeavour to implement national restrictions or bans additional to those contained in amended Protocol II, particularly on their operational use. Importantly, it commits the Union to contribute on an ongoing basis to international mine clearance efforts, including through further contributions to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance and/or in response to the request of a regional organization or a third country's authorities. It allocates an amount of up to 7 million ECUs from the budget of the European Communities for initiatives to be launched up to the end of 1997; this is in addition to the significant national contributions of member States. The Union allocated 3 million ECUs and 3.6 million ECUs to the Trust Fund for 1995 and 1996 respectively. Furthermore, it will continue to provide specific assistance for mine clearance. In this regard, the European Community has devoted over 21 million ECUs to civil mine clearance actions in 1996, as well as pursuing related activities. The new Joint Action develops the multi-faceted character of the Union's extensive contribution to mine clearance.

The European Union is convinced that transparency in armaments is an important factor in building a climate of trust and confidence between States. In relation to weapons of mass destruction, transparency is a function of the measures included in international disarmament agreements to enable States Parties to demonstrate their full compliance with their obligations. It is for this reason that the European Union attaches so much importance to verification of compliance with these agreements.

For similar reasons, the European Union attaches major importance to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. This mechanism provides data on international transfers in seven categories of conventional arms. In each reporting period, beginning with 1992, some 90 countries have submitted returns to the Register. All European Union member States have consistently done so, generally providing, in addition, background information on military holdings and procurement through national production. The improvement in the number and geographical spread of returns to the Register for 1995 is an encouraging sign. However, we remain concerned to encourage universal participation. Clearly, the review of the continuing operation and further development of the Register, to be carried out next year by the Secretary-General with the assistance of a group of governmental experts, will be important in developing this mechanism. In order to promote the functioning of the Register and its further development, the European Union member States will, as in recent years, table a draft resolution reflecting the value we place on the sole universal mechanism we have in the service of transparency in transfers and holdings of conventional arms. We look forward to wide co-sponsorship and consensus support for the resolution.

The European Union continues to attach high importance to the United Nations standardized reporting of military expenditure, as instituted through the adoption of United Nations General Assembly resolution 35/142 B. Although this measure of transparency and confidence-building has been in effect for about 15 years, the low level of participation by United Nations Member States — just over 20 in 1995 — remains a cause for concern. We must develop greater acceptance by Member States of the value of standardized reporting of military expenditures. By way of addressing this problem, the Union provided a joint reply to United Nations General Assembly resolution 49/66 on "Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures". This was done in order to assist the Secretary-General in preparing his report to this session.

In May of this year, the United Nations Disarmament Commission completed its consideration of an agenda item which is of concern to all members of this Committee. The European Union views the adoption by consensus of a set of Guidelines for International Arms Transfers in the context of General Assembly resolution 46/36 H as an encouraging development. It is an acknowledgement that the United Nations, in keeping with its overall purposes and principles, has a legitimate interest in the field of arms transfers and that responsibility in armaments transfers is important for the maintenance of international peace and security. The European Union considers it essential that all States should exercise responsibility in relation to conventional arms transfers. In this context, the European Union welcomes the formal establishment of the Wassenaar Arrangement and looks forward to the implementation of the control lists on the target date of 1 November 1996. We look also to the Conference on Disarmament to address matters related to conventional arms in a more sustained and structured fashion in the future than it has in the past.

The reactivation of the Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency in Armaments would be a practical demonstration of the political will of the Conference to

adopt a balanced agenda of nuclear and conventional arms issues. As the Secretary-General's "Supplement to an Agenda for Peace" makes clear, practical ways need to be found to address the dangers which may arise from the transfer of small arms and light weapons. With a view to assisting the Secretary-General in preparing his report to our next session, the Union has provided a joint reply to General Assembly resolution 50/70 B on "Small arms". We look ahead with interest to the report of the panel of experts established under this resolution.

Confidence-building and disarmament measures have a particular value at the regional and subregional level. Europe has direct experience, within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, of the value of transparency in military matters in developing trust at the regional level. The European Union invites those States that have yet to ratify the Treaty on Open Skies to do so as soon as possible. This Treaty is an important confidence- and security- building measure which will have useful application at the regional and subregional level. I have referred earlier to important developments in conventional disarmament in the European region.

The NPT Review and Extension Conference agreed that internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones, based on arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned, enhance global and regional peace and security. The European Union considers such zones as important complementary instruments to the NPT. There have been significant achievements over the past year in the development of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

The Union welcomed the signature in Cairo on 11 April 1996 of the Pelindaba Treaty establishing the African nuclear-weapon- free zone. We are pleased that 49 of the 53 States on the African continent signed the Treaty and recall that four of the five nuclear-weapon States, including the United Kingdom and France, by their signature of the relevant Protocols, have demonstrated their support for the zone. By signing the relevant Protocols to the Treaty of Rarotonga on 25 March 1996, France, the United Kingdom and the United States demonstrated their support for a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the South Pacific on the one hand and their wish to see a permanent end to all nuclear testing throughout the world on the other. The European Union welcomes the efforts to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South-East Asia. The Union supports this project and urges the countries of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) to pursue their objective in a way that recognizes general principles of international law. The European Union welcomes the steady consolidation of the regime established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the first Treaty to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in a large inhabited region of the world.

Mindful that the NPT Review and Extension Conference called on all States Parties — and in particular the nuclear-weapon States — to do so, the European Union continues to support efforts for the early establishment by States in the region of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. This Committee has a responsibility to approach this difficult issue, as all other issues, in a balanced and constructive way.

Accession by regional States, particularly in South Asia and the Middle East, to the NPT, which remains the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation regime, would contribute to confidence that nuclear programmes in the regions in question were exclusively for peaceful purposes.

The European Union wishes to underline the importance it attaches to efforts towards strengthening security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region. Our joint reply to the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 50/75 comprehensively describes the Union's approach, with particular reference to the Euro-Mediterranean partnership initiative launched at the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference in Barcelona in November 1995. The Union has also provided a joint reply to United Nations resolution 50/80 B on "Development of good-neighbourly relations among Balkan States", on which subject the Secretary-General will report to the Committee next year.

The European Union participated very actively in Working Group II of the United Nations Disarmament Commission this year. From the Working Group's exchange of views on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, there emerged a Chairman's non-paper which has many useful elements for future work. In this context, the Union would draw the attention of the Committee to its own working paper setting out succinctly the Union's perception of elements on which all participating delegations might agree.

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of careful preparation and consensus-building on all aspects of the convening of a fourth special session on disarmament, which would have the task of considering disarmament and non-proliferation issues in the changed international security environment. Having regard to the major disarmament and

non-proliferation conferences already scheduled for the remaining years of the decade and to the need to concentrate scarce resources on specific and focused disarmament events and on goals attainable in the short term, consensus on the timing of another special session on disarmament and broad agreement on its objectives are vital to the prospects of success. Developing the balance of the agenda between weapons of mass destruction issues and conventional weapons issues will require painstaking work, which in turn has a bearing on the question of timing. Our consideration of these interrelated and important issues will benefit if all delegations cooperate constructively in the First Committee, as happened in the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

In deciding on 17 June of this year to implement its earlier decision CD/1356, the Conference on Disarmament admitted a further 23 States as members, bringing the total membership of the main negotiating body on disarmament to 61. The European Union reiterates here its satisfaction with the admission of the new members and the importance it continues to attach to the timely consideration of the other candidatures to date. The European Union repeats its earlier expression of disappointment that the Conference on Disarmament failed to consider the admission of the remaining candidates before the end of its 1996 session, notwithstanding the terms of its own decision CD/1356 and of United Nations resolution 50/72 C. Given that it has always been the European Union's objective that all States which have applied for Conference on Disarmament membership to date should be admitted, and given that some of the remaining candidatures of European Union member States were submitted over a decade ago, the European Union will support a draft resolution on the issue of the remaining candidatures at this session of the Committee.

Finally, the question of rationalization of the work and reform of the agenda of the First Committee is not on our agenda this year. Last year, member States of the European Union contributed actively to the thematic debates which followed the Committee's general debate. We believe that the further development of these informal discussions would enhance understanding of our respective positions and thereby contribute to constructive and efficient work by this Committee. We look forward to the active participation of all delegations in the thematic discussions this year.

Mr. Wisnumurti (Indonesia): I should like, first of all, to extend our congratulations on your election as Chairman of our Committee. We are confident that under your stewardship we will achieve substantive progress on the many crucial issues on our agenda. I should also like to extend our felicitations to the other members of the Bureau on their election.

This year's session of the First Committee is convened against the backdrop of some encouraging developments in arms limitation and disarmament. After years of frustrating and sterile controversy, we have finally realized our collective goal of banning nuclear explosions for all time and in all environments. Member States of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and other South-East Asian nations, at their meeting held last December, signed the historic Treaty on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in their region. Likewise, the Pelindaba Treaty of last April has made the African continent a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Meanwhile, with the signature of France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America in March of this year, all the nuclear-weapon States have now acceded to the relevant Protocols to the Treaty of Rarotonga. Furthermore, the agreed framework accord between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has been implemented to the satisfaction of the parties concerned. Yet another positive development is the recent transfer of nuclear weapons from the territories of Belarus and Ukraine to the Russian Federation, and the application of full-scope safeguards agreements reached by these States with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have assured their non-nuclear status. Taken together, these advances have bolstered our hopes of eventually achieving the goal of a nuclear-free world.

But we are also acutely aware of a number of profoundly negative developments. Despite expectations by the international community, the summit meeting held between the two major powers last April in Moscow regrettably failed to address the question of the further reduction of strategic arsenals. Prospects for the early ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction by the two largest possessors of these weapons have unfortunately receded into the background with the attendant consequences. New challenges to non-proliferation and international security, such as illicit commerce and trafficking in nuclear technology and materials, nuclear-weapons-related accidents as well as the frightening prospects of nuclear terrorism that have begun to emerge, have introduced a profoundly destabilizing element into the strategic equation. Meanwhile, strategic posturing by some nuclear-weapon States, increased defence expenditures, new ballistic missile

defence systems and exclusive control clubs are some of the regrettable features of the post-cold-war era.

To facilitate our endeavours to achieve the priority goal of global nuclear disarmament and related issues, we now have the 1995 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) statement by the nuclear powers, the Programme of Action for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons prepared by the Group of 21 and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

First, the achievements of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference should be restated unambiguously and categorically. The three decisions adopted at that Conference are inextricably interrelated and constitute a comprehensive package. This was made clear in the extension decision, which reaffirmed article VIII, paragraph 3 of the Treaty, emphasized the need for the strengthening of the review process, and underlined the importance of implementing the decision on Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. Hence, the immediate agenda to achieve the aims of the NPT should be the strengthening of the review process through the primary responsibility of States Parties to the treaty in fulfilling their obligations, especially under article VI. We share the widely held view that the indefinite extension of the NPT was rendered possible on the basis of meaningful and continuing progress on nuclear disarmament.

Secondly, the Programme of Action for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons submitted by the Group of 21 in Geneva contains a realistic approach to attain this priority objective. In Indonesia's view, it consists of an all-encompassing and mutually supportive set of measures in all relevant areas leading to nuclear disarmament under effective multilateral auspices. The negotiating process itself could proceed in time-bound phases, while ensuring at each phase the development of appropriate procedures, measures and agreements.

Such an approach would include, *inter alia*, identifying the duties and obligations of the nuclear Powers to refrain from the threat or use of nuclear weapons; initiating negotiations towards an international convention on security assurances to non-nuclear States; banning the production of fissile materials for weapons purposes; stemming the qualitative growth and improvement of nuclear weapons; and searching for alternatives to the so-called doctrines of deterrence and reliance on nuclear weapons.

These should be followed by concrete measures of nuclear disarmament, such as the initiation of negotiations for further deep reductions in strategic nuclear forces, which could be undertaken in a series of phased actions; dismantlement of weapons that are withdrawn by States and an undertaking not to modernize their weapons; genuine build-down of nuclear arsenals, an essential component of which would be multilateral monitoring of existing stocks of nuclear warheads; reduction of operationally deployed nuclear weapons and handing over of the fissile material to multilaterally supervised storage.

Over and above those approaches, a genuine commitment to a nuclear-free world by the nuclear Powers has become imperative. Such a commitment would greatly enhance the prospects for international security, prepare the ground for more drastic cuts in nuclear armaments, and bolster efforts for their total elimination. The declaration of stockpiles of plutonium and highly enriched uranium would enhance the overall transparency of nuclear weapon programmes, which would constitute a valuable confidence-building measure. It would also reinforce other initiatives such as visits to nuclear-weapon facilities, discussion of nuclear doctrines and changes in force postures, which would remove suspicions and thereby enhance cooperation. Furthermore, as called for by the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, cooperative arrangements for managing nuclear weapons involving both nuclear and non-nuclear nations have become essential. Thus, the stage would be set for the implementation of the various components of the Programme of Action with a unified approach through the adoption of concrete and forward-looking measures.

The cause of nuclear disarmament was bolstered by the significant contribution made by the 10 countries of South-East Asia. Following a series of intensive consultations, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit held in Bangkok signed the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty. It encompasses the territories of all States Parties to the Treaty as well as the maritime areas under their sovereignty and jurisdiction in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The States concerned have undertaken not to develop, manufacture or otherwise acquire, possess or have control over nuclear weapons and to utilize nuclear energy exclusively for peaceful purposes under IAEA safeguards. While the Treaty is yet to be ratified, we hope that the nuclear powers will extend their support by acceding to its Protocol. Thus, with the conclusion of Treaties for nuclear-weapon-free zones in South-East Asia and Africa, along with the Antarctic, Rarotonga and

Tlatelolco Treaties, the southern hemisphere should become free of the nuclear menace. Indonesia extends its full and unstinted support for the aspiration of the States concerned, which have shown a commonality of interests and firm determination to cooperate in transforming this large segment of the earth's surface into a nuclear-free area.

After two and half years of protracted and arduous negotiations, the Conference on Disarmament concluded the long-sought ban on nuclear testing. Indeed, successive meetings of non-aligned countries have long stressed the need for a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as a step that must be taken not only to stem horizontal and vertical proliferation but also to achieve the eventual elimination of nuclear armaments.

The Treaty outlaws nuclear test explosions by all States in all environments for all time, ensures that the ban is effective and verifiable, and provides new ground for the realization of the objectives set by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. However, having become a reality in large measure because of the substantial compromises made by the non-nuclear States, the Treaty is flawed in its essential aspects. It allows for the improvement of nuclear arsenals and related technologies through laboratory-scale nuclear testing. A treaty that permits technical loopholes for testing cannot be comprehensive, which has all along been the *raison d'etre* for the CTBT. Further, the Treaty does not address the question of nuclear disarmament, as if a CTBT was an end in itself. The entry into force of the Treaty is also uncertain, as it requires ratification by 44 signatories deemed to be nuclear-capable within a set time-frame. This has placed the future of the Treaty in jeopardy.

These inherent weaknesses notwithstanding, it would be unrealistic to underestimate the importance of what was achieved in the Conference on Disarmament, which has once again demonstrated the validity of multilateralism in nuclear arms limitation. We fully agree that the time has come for the Conference on Disarmament to establish an ad hoc committee for negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament and for the eventual elimination of all nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework. Moreover, the international community cannot dispense with a CTBT, despite its imperfections, because failure to seize an existing opportunity would have led to negative implications for disarmament and we would have run the risk of delaying action to an uncertain future. It should also be emphasized that the CTBT does not constitute the ultimate goal of our decades-long effort but should lead to concerted endeavours by all States, in particular nuclear powers, to attain our priority objective of nuclear disarmament. Having signed the Treaty on that basis, it is my delegation's hope that it will eventually be supported by the entire membership so that it will become an effective instrument to move towards the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

As a reflection of Indonesia's commitment to non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, I am pleased to inform the Committee, with regard to the implementation of verification mechanism of the CTBT, that the Indonesian Government will provide six seismic stations, which will integrate with the international seismic network in order to monitor nuclear explosions. Furthermore, this week in Jakarta, my Government plays host to the Asia and Pacific workshop on the Third Technical Test and the CTBT, organized by the Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts to Consider International Cooperative Measures to Detect and Identify Seismic Events.

Thirdly, my delegation warmly welcomes the ICJ's advisory opinion concerning the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons. This question, which over the years has been a pre-eminent concern of the global community, has found expression in successive documents of the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement and scores of international conferences and meetings. No form of warfare has confronted humanity with dangers even remotely comparable with the dangers unleashed by the use of nuclear weapons, which adds a frightening dimension to the potentialities for worldwide catastrophe. Their possession and possible use constitutes an unprecedented threat to human society and civilization. What is at stake is the most fundamental right of all humans and of nations, that is, the right to their very survival and existence. Despite these self-evident and principal concerns, the major powers have shown a callous disregard for the global calamitous consequences that would surely ensue from the use of nuclear weapons.

Although the political, military and ethical aspects of nuclear weapons have been discussed by Member States on numerous occasions in the past, it is the legal implications of their use that have to be fully addressed and clarified. It is in this context that the advisory opinion of the ICJ has set the legal parameters whereby the use of nuclear weapons would violate not only customary international law but also the Geneva and Hague Conventions. It is particularly gratifying that the ICJ pronounced unambiguously that

> "There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control." (*A/51/4, para. 182*)

More than eight years have elapsed since the international community reviewed the status of disarmament during the General Assembly's third special session on disarmament held in 1988. Meanwhile, a myriad of unresolved issues has continued to be of pre-eminent concern to the international community, calling for a reassessment of our disarmament agenda as well as the formulation of new strategies and approaches. One central aim not yet fully met by the United Nations is that of general and complete disarmament. There is an imperative need to continue to build on the agreements already reached and for concerted efforts focused on unresolved issues which should be addressed at the forthcoming fourth special session on disarmament, as they represent a continuing threat to international peace and security.

In this context, we would endorse an agenda that included basic principles and general guidelines for the limitation and elimination of nuclear armaments and recognized the importance of limiting conventional armaments. The institutional arrangements would also have to be reviewed, especially the functioning of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament issues.

The convening of the fourth special session on disarmament would rightly reaffirm that disarmament is a common concern in which all nations have a legitimate role to play. It would reaffirm the profound sense of urgency with which we all view the overriding need to terminate the frantic accumulation of armaments, with its incalculable consequences for mankind. The need for multilateral deliberations and multilateral agreements, and thus the indispensable role of the United Nations, would also be explicitly recognized. Furthermore, it would provide a global forum where the international community as a whole could devote full attention to a comprehensive review and assessment of the wide range of disarmament issues. General Assembly resolution 50/70 F has called for the establishment of a Preparatory Committee whose primary task is to prepare a draft agenda, examine all relevant questions relating to the special session and submit its recommendations to the General Assembly. We are therefore duty-bound to start the preparatory process during early next year so as to permit the convening of the fourth special session on disarmament in 1999.

Mr. Wyzner (Poland): Before I turn to the substantive part of my intervention, Sir, let me first offer you my sincere felicitations on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. We are pleased to see the representative of neighbourly Belarus in that position of high responsibility. You will have my delegation's full cooperation in the discharge of your difficult mandate. I also take this opportunity to add my congratulations to all the members of the Bureau of the Committee.

Since my country has associated itself with the statement just made by the Ambassador of Ireland on behalf of the European Union, I shall confine my intervention to some questions of more direct concern to Poland. I wish first to give due attention to an issue which, in the view of my delegation, is pre-eminent in the context of arms control and disarmament.

Today, as the United Nations turns 51, the purposes and principles set forth in the Charter are as crucial as they were at the time of the founding of the Organization. This is especially true with regard to the principal responsibility of the United Nations:

> "to maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace".

Poland is gratified, that in pursuit of that basic goal, the General Assembly, at the close of its fiftieth session on 10 September, took, on Australia's initiative, a momentous decision to approve and commend for signature the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

In the view of my country, the impressive number of signatures deposited under the Treaty text by the Heads of State — among them, the President of the Republic of Poland, Mr. Aleksander Kwasniewski — and by Heads of Government and Foreign Ministers from around the world demonstrates the determination of States to promote a global security architecture that no longer needs to rely on the sustained qualitative development and numerical growth of nuclear arms. Today, the nature of threats to peace and international security does not, in our view, call for the ultimate weapon. On the eve of the year 2000, practicable and realistic disarmament measures, confidence-building and all-round cooperation commend themselves as more credible safeguards of peace.

Such safeguards have worked in one part of Europe, making a decisive contribution to its peace, stability and prosperity. Poland's well-known determination to integrate

with the Euro-Atlantic economic, political and military structures, in particular the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, is motivated by its strong desire to contribute to consolidating and expanding that area of stability, cooperation and prosperity as the best safeguards of peace and security throughout the European continent.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, an elusive goal for over four decades, is important not only because it responds to mankind's aspirations. Its significance resides first and foremost in its tangible, practical implications for global peace and security. It significantly reinforces the existing regime of non-proliferation of nuclear arms; it staves off qualitative nuclear-arms development and maps the way to further progress in nuclear disarmament efforts. Together with the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction of 1993, the CTBT represents a major step to rid the world of weapons of mass destruction.

It has been most gratifying for Poland that, for the first time in the nuclear era, all five nuclear Powers are of one mind with regard to the cessation of nuclear tests. Their joint observance of nuclear test moratoriums is unassailable proof of their good faith. With the CTBT in place, the international community has not squandered the historic opportunity for turning that remarkable meeting of minds on the nuclear test-ban into a binding rule of international law. We therefore urge all United Nations Members that have not yet done so to sign the CTBT and seek its entry into force as soon as possible.

At this juncture, I cannot refrain from reflecting on the Conference on Disarmament and its role in making the CTBT happen. Its strenuous efforts with a view to a timely discharge of its negotiating mandate must be commended.

After two and a half years of intensive efforts presided over successively by the representatives of Mexico, Poland and the Netherlands, the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban had come to the end of its negotiating tether. Earlier this year, it appeared that the negotiating possibilities were clearly exhausted in Geneva. Consequently, while the final draft treaty presented by the Netherlands was not fully satisfactory to many delegations, a broad convergence of views developed that the document represented a judicious compromise and, indeed, the best achievable result.

The fact that one member of the Conference on Disarmament, in the exercise of its sovereign rights, has refused to go along with consensus in no way detracts, in our opinion, from the intrinsic merit of the collective accomplishment of the Conference. Many of its members, Poland among them, were of the view that the international community had awaited the test-ban Treaty for too long, that too much was at stake in the CTBT and that too much of a collective effort had gone into its negotiation, for them, at the end of the day, to see the draft treaty text discarded and ignored.

As a country that played a considerable role in the negotiating process, Poland believes that it was right and appropriate for the Treaty text to be brought before the broader international community in order to allow the General Assembly to see for itself and recognize the intrinsic value of that accord. The vote on General Assembly resolution 50/245 leaves no doubt that the General Assembly's finding was positive in regard to the draft treaty and its negotiators.

As the single multilateral disarmament negotiating body, the Conference on Disarmament has again confirmed its expertise and enduring usefulness, demonstrating in the process the important role which multilateral diplomacy can play in the field of arms control and disarmament.

With the CTBT off the Conference's agenda, a pertinent question remains: On what realistic goal or goals should the Conference on Disarmament now urgently focus its attention? An agenda dating back to the cold-war confrontation has obviously lost its relevance. A new, more realistic one needs to be developed urgently. Obviously, in this exercise, any attempts at artificial or formal linkages would not be helpful. Pending the conclusion of efforts now under way to review the Conference's agenda and to ensure a better balance between nuclear and conventional issues, there is scope, in our view, for productive multilateral disarmament efforts in the days ahead.

An outstanding topic is, of course, the problem of the cessation of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. A negotiated ban in that regard would be a natural supplement to the CTBT. It would be consonant not only with the relevant General Assembly resolutions, but also with the important political steps already taken by some nuclear Powers to halt or significantly reduce the further production of weapons-grade fissionable materials. Poland is of the view, therefore, that constructive purpose-oriented efforts in that

area ought to be urgently resumed in Geneva, building on the ground already covered.

We do believe that the Conference on Disarmament could also usefully resume its work in other areas that have been addressed over the years, albeit without distinct success. That certainly applies to the questions of the prevention of an arms race in outer space, transparency in armaments and security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States. With regard to the latter issue, we are convinced, for instance, that, once reactivated, the subsidiary organ on security assurances could benefit from the relevant Security Council discussions held earlier this year. Security Council resolution 984 (1995) on unilateral security assurances by the nuclear-weapon States commends itself as a suitable starting point for examination of the feasibility of broader multilateral solutions.

Poland has consistently held that, owing to their confidence-building potential, the issue of transparency in armaments and the broader question of conventional arms-control measures, on both the regional and global scale, deserve urgent consideration. In particular, further work needs to be carried out on the possible substantive and geographical expansion of the Register of Conventional Arms. Like many other States, Poland has regularly submitted standardized annual returns to the Register. To be fully meaningful as a confidence-building instrument, the Register must gain universal application. We therefore call on those States which have not yet done so to begin submitting their returns to the Register. Poland will be among the sponsors of an appropriate draft resolution in that respect.

The use of conventional arms, often random and always indiscriminate, takes the sad credit for the death and suffering of thousands of innocent victims of local and regional conflicts. Continued indifference to calls of the international community for effective remedial action in that area is no longer sustainable. These weapons and their use must also be addressed in contexts other than the humanitarian. In Poland's firm view, the Conference on Disarmament must have a role to play in that regard. This applies in particular to the question of landmines, as well as to other aspects of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects. Here, as with respect to security guarantees to non-nuclear-weapon States, the Security Council has made useful suggestions which deserve careful in-depth examination in the appropriate contexts, including that of the Conference on Disarmament. We strongly believe that the question of landmines in particular must not escape the attention of the Conference. Although certain restrictions with regard to landmines were agreed to at the last Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention on certain conventional weapons, they do not offer an adequate response to the problem.

My country has initiated a procedure leading to the ratification of the modified Protocol II to the Convention on certain conventional weapons. We urge other United Nations Members to do likewise in order to promote the early entry into force of that instrument. At the same time, we consider that it falls far short of actual needs. The time has come for more tangible and meaningful measures. Indeed, Poland is among those countries which deem it imperative to advance the cause of a global ban on the use, stockpiling, promotion and transfer of anti-personnel landmines, irrespective of the level of their technical sophistication. We therefore welcome the declaration adopted at the international strategy conference on anti-personnel landmines held at Ottawa earlier this month. The broad consensus which has emerged in Ottawa on the need for States to work together to ensure

> "the earliest possible conclusion of a legally-binding international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines"

is a good augury for early progress in that respect. While we are open as to where and how to start dealing with the landmine issue, we continue to believe that the enlarged Conference on Disarmament offers a suitable venue for international efforts in that respect. That venue should not be dismissed.

Poland is among those Members which have sponsored all General Assembly resolutions calling for a landmine-export moratorium. It is our intention to cosponsor an appropriate draft resolution on landmines this year as well. Poland has not produced any landmines since the mid-1980s. In keeping with the relevant General Assembly resolution, it has also refrained from their exportation, even though a formal moratorium on such exports has been in force only since September 1995.

At this juncture, let me note that Poland favours entrusting humanitarian mine-clearance responsibilities to United Nations peacekeepers. We find it appropriate that routine peacekeeping tasks, as well as those undertaken within the framework of post-conflict reconstruction, should encompass mine-clearance. In fact, the Polish contingent in

the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon has been involved in such activities for quite some time.

The question of chemical weapons and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) has been a subject of traditional interest to Poland for a number of years. As will be recalled, my country, alternating with Canada, used to submit and pilot appropriate General Assembly draft resolutions, a role which we intend to resume this year.

Today, it is with special satisfaction that we note an important development with regard to the CWC. Opened for signature in Paris in January 1993, the Convention has achieved 64 of the 65 ratifications that are necessary for its entry into force. That momentous event is now imminent. With the final ratification conceivable any day, we can confidently look forward to the entry into force of the CWC early in 1997. As a result, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons will be empowered to assume full control over the implementation process of the Convention. We welcome the fact that its compliance-verification mechanism is in place and fully operational.

The great contribution of this accord to international security has been widely recognized by all States. It is our deep hope that all signatories, especially those possessing chemical weapons, will ratify the Convention as soon as possible and that the world will at long last be freed from chemical weapons, in accordance with the time-frames agreed in the Convention.

Poland's early ratification of the Convention confirms our non-proliferation policy. It has also offered a signal of our determination to seek its earliest entry into force. We stand ready to contribute further to the full implementation of the Convention. To this end, Poland intends to present its candidature and seek election to the Executive Council at the first Conference of the States Parties. At the same time, we are undertaking all necessary measures to fulfil our national obligations under the Convention. In accordance with Government decisions, the national system of implementation of the Convention will be founded upon a firm legislative basis. It will give effect to all basic obligations and responsibilities of Poland, and provide, *inter alia*, for an appropriate administrative mechanism in this respect. Since Poland has never possessed chemical weapons, our obligations will thus concern the CWC provisions which govern the chemical industry, as set forth in article VI and in particular in the declarations. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be designated the National Authority, over which I will have the honour of presiding. The Authority will serve as a contact point for the Organization and other Member States and will function as an umbrella agency working in close liaison with all institutions involved in the national implementation of the CWC.

My country has been actively participating in the work of the Preparatory Commission for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We hope for an increased pace of the permanent negotiating process at The Hague. We also look forward to a sustained, intensive search for compromise solutions with respect to all the unresolved issues, especially in the sphere of implementation. These negotiations, in our opinion, will be more productive if there is a clear understanding of the imperative need to maintain the basic provisions of the Convention intact and if all negotiating parties are prepared to demonstrate their political willingness to seek mutually acceptable solutions to all outstanding issues in the agreed text of the Convention. Poland would find unacceptable any attempt to reinterpret any provision of the Convention, for this could upset the delicate balance of rights and obligations of the States parties, particularly in the sphere of verification.

In concluding my intervention, I wish to restate the commitment of the Republic of Poland to the broad goals of disarmament, both nuclear and conventional. We are determined to pursue them in close cooperation with the members of the European Union and the whole international community, in the hope that, on the threshold of the twenty-first century, they will pave the way to a peaceful and prosperous future for all nations.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): May I congratulate you, Sir, and the members of the Bureau on your election. I am confident that, under your stewardship, this Committee will be able to carry out its work to its successful conclusion. My delegation extends to you our fullest cooperation.

My delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for the very important and comprehensive statement he has just made to this Committee. His statement will surely provide a useful setting for the discussion of the issues before the Committee.

My delegation has consistently maintained that the United Nations has a central role to play and a primary responsibility in addressing the issues of disarmament in ways that will further strengthen international peace and security. In doing so, we believe that the multilateral mechanisms of the United Nations system should be fully utilized. Recent developments in the field of disarmament

should inspire and motivate us to strive harder to enhance our collective determination to promote genuine progress towards the realization of the goals of general and complete disarmament. My delegation hopes that the deliberations at this session of the General Assembly will make a positive and meaningful contribution to the attainment of these goals.

The adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) on 10 September this year has been described as one of the most significant events pertaining to nuclear disarmament. My Prime Minister, Mr. Mahathir Mohamad, expressed Malaysia's position on the CTBT during his recent address to the General Assembly at this session. He characterized the CTBT as being flawed and deficient in a number of aspects, not the least of which were its failure to place the Treaty in the overall context of nuclear disarmament, its lack of a clear time-frame for the total elimination of nuclear weapons and an ill-conceived and controversial entry-into-force provision.

Nevertheless, Malaysia supported the enabling resolution during the resumed session of the fiftieth General Assembly and will sign the Treaty out of the realization that an imperfect Treaty is better than no treaty. While we regret that the Treaty will not put an end to all forms and manner of testing of nuclear-weapon devices, the Treaty will halt, or at the very least, strongly inhibit nuclear testing as we know it. The challenge before the international community, pending the entry into force of the Treaty, is to ensure that the current moratoriums on nuclear testing are being and will continue to be observed, while exerting every effort to secure the universal endorsement of the Treaty.

The Malaysian delegation attaches vital importance to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a global instrument to check nuclear proliferation. It is the hope of my delegation that the review process to strengthen the NPT, which is due to begin in 1997, will provide us with the opportunity to consider further steps that could be taken by States Parties to fulfil their Treaty obligations, particularly in respect of those stipulated in article VI of the Treaty. We also hope that the review process will seriously consider efforts that could be made to bring into the NPT regime those few countries that remain outside, so as to achieve its much-desired universality. This remains an extremely important objective. In this regard, my delegation wishes to underscore the special role and responsibility of the nuclear-weapon States vis-à-vis the NPT, as the fulfilment of their part of the bargain is critical to ensuring the universality of the Treaty.

My delegation welcomes the recent Advisory Opinion delivered by the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, in response to General Assembly resolution 49/75 K. Malaysia and 21 other countries presented separate written and oral submissions to the Court at The Hague. While the Court did not conclude definitively whether the threat or use of nuclear weapons should be lawful or unlawful, even in extreme circumstance of self-defence in which the very survival of a State would be at stake, it concluded unanimously that

> "There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control". *(A/51/4, para. 182 (f))*

While we would have preferred a categorical ruling by the Court outlawing the threat or use of nuclear weapons, my delegation nevertheless considers the Court's Advisory Opinion to be an important development in the overall disarmament context. It was a positive contribution by the Court to the realization of the goal of total elimination of nuclear weapons, which must be pursued by the international community if we are to eliminate the possibility of this planet, and all the people on it, being annihilated by these horrendous weapons of mass destruction. My delegation salutes the Court for this courageous legal Opinion, which in our view has reinforced the faith of the international community in the integrity and the important role of the Court in the international system.

To render the Court's Advisory Opinion meaningful, this Committee and the General Assembly should work at this session towards accelerating the process of nuclear disarmament. Towards this end, in our determined pursuit of the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons, Malaysia, together with other like-minded countries, will be initiating a follow-up draft resolution in this Committee pertaining to the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice. We hope that this initiative will be supported by all those countries that are fundamentally opposed to the threat or use of nuclear weapons and desire to see a world entirely free of these weapons of mass destruction.

My delegation is encouraged by the accelerating trend of the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. In December 1995, the countries of South-East Asia, after

long years of negotiation, concluded the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, which will contribute to the further enhancement of regional peace and security. This Treaty calls upon the nuclear Powers to accede to the Protocol to the Treaty; the South-East Asian States look forward to this accession at an early date.

My delegation also lauds the signing of the Cairo Declaration on 11 April 1996, which formally established the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone through the Pelindaba Treaty. The establishment of these zones, in addition to those established in Latin America and the Caribbean through the Treaty of Tlatelolco and in the South Pacific through the Treaty of Rarotonga, reflects the genuine aspiration of the peoples of these regions to be free of nuclear insecurity. With the establishment of the four nuclear-weapon-free zones, the entire southern hemisphere is now almost nuclear free. The further strengthening of these regimes through the establishment of new ones, especially in conflict-prone areas of the world, would be a major contribution to promoting nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. In this respect, the initiative being taken in this Committee by the delegation of Brazil aimed at further consolidating existing nuclear-weapon-free zones is commendable.

In conclusion, my delegation hopes that deliberations in this Committee and at this session of the General Assembly will contribute to advancing the disarmament process a step further towards the ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. We urge delegations to draw inspiration and encouragement from recent positive developments in nuclear disarmament, such as the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion and the signing of the CTBT. However, this can happen only if old and outdated security concepts, paradigms and mind sets are discarded, and the sooner the better. A new phase must begin to persuade and prod nuclear-weapon States to rethink their nuclear policy in the post-cold-war period. At the same time, every effort should be made to discourage or prevent States with aspirations to acquiring nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction from proceeding with their plans.

In the interests of saving time, I have touched on only some of the issues before us. My delegation intends to make further brief and, hopefully, focused interventions on other specific issues in the course of deliberations in this Committee.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I shall be brief. On behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, I should like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of the Bureau on your assumption of the leadership of our Committee. Your country, Belarus, has taken an exemplary stand in the field of disarmament and your presence is therefore especially encouraging.

These meetings of the First Committee are taking place at a new and unprecedented political moment, which the international community must exploit if it is to make progress in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. To date, more than 130 States have signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is already a reality.

We must now make progress in those areas in which there have been delays. The Chemical Weapons Convention must enter into force; its non-entry into force is an anachronism that does not fit into the new and unprecedented international context in which we are living. Now that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has been adopted, the Conference on Disarmament must make substantial progress in negotiations to arrive at a fissile material cut-off convention.

As a full-fledged member of the first Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone on Earth, established under the Treaty of Tlatelolco, we firmly believe in the vital need to consolidate each of the other nuclear-weapon-free zones of our planet. In the South Atlantic, an area of particular importance to Argentina, a nuclear-weapon-free zone is in operation. In our view, there is no cause for concern with regard to potential conflicts in this area.

We appeal to all States, especially to the nuclear-weapon States, to continue to move forward on the path already charted.

Flexibility and imagination should be the guiding principles of our negotiations. The recent Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice provides stimulating ideas that, contrary to what might be thought, are widely applicable, since the spirit of the document clearly encompasses all countries. The force of all these ideas has led my country to change the way it acts and to move towards building a new framework for inter-State relations.

New challenges face us in what the Secretary-General correctly terms "micro-disarmament". Work on the major topics of macro-disarmament is now in the process of being implemented and completed. Argentina would now wish to

draw attention to the need to resolve the concrete problems affecting the daily life of our societies. I am referring to the international trade in arms and the planting of anti-personnel landmines. The international trade in arms has become potentially very harmful at a time when new territorial disputes and inter-community conflicts are proliferating in various parts of the world.

In connection with this trade, Argentina is involved, through the Organization of American States Special Committee on Hemispheric Security, in the development of inventories of confidence-building measures that are appropriate to the western hemisphere and are based on our own experience and on that of other regions.

At the global level, we support the functioning of the Register of Conventional Arms. This is undoubtedly one of the main achievements of multilateral disarmament in recent years.

As regards the laying of anti-personnel landmines, we believe that the time has come to negotiate an international treaty totally banning the use of all types of mines. Argentina has long been opposed to this type of weapon, which is particularly hard on the civilian population. It is in our power to find a solution very soon.

We know that, in the interest of peace and security today, we have to embark on new paths. But we are now able to take up the struggle against the so-called new threats to security because, fortunately, we are closing the door on a period in which the possibility of nuclear holocaust touched the lives of everyone in the world.

Major challenges lie ahead. The agenda of this Committee makes that remarkably clear. We therefore have to respond with imagination and flexibility. The reforms we undertake should be geared more to the future than to duplicating the structures of the past. My delegation will make every effort to contribute to the success of this process.

Organization of work

The Chairman: I would like to inform members of the Committee that, at my request, the Secretariat is trying to arrange conference facilities for a special meeting in order to enable the First Committee to consider the relevant part of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, which is contained in document A/51/6. This special meeting of the Committee will be announced in the *Journal* in due course.

I would like to remind the Committee that, in accordance with the Committee's decisions, the list of speakers for the general debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items will be closed today at 6 p.m. I urge interested delegations to inscribe their names on the list of speakers as soon as possible.

Mr. Parnohadiningrat (Indonesia): Speaking in its capacity as Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement Working Group on Disarmament, my delegation, on behalf of the States members of the Non-Aligned Movement, would like to request the postponement of the Committee's deliberations of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 until sometime next week, since this is the first time that the First Committee is addressing the medium-term plan. Taking into account the complex nature of the subprogramme on disarmament included therein, we believe that ample time should be made available for informal consultations among delegations.

The Chairman: I have taken note of the statement.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.